




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Stephanie Hayden, Director 

DATE: October 30, 2020

SUBJECT: Response to Resolution 20200312-042 – Austin Public Health

On March 12, 2020, Council approved Resolution No. 20200312-042, a resolution relating to individuals experiencing homelessness being served through the Coordinated Entry System with Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing programs.

Austin Public Health (APH) continues to serve our most vulnerable populations with current efforts and resources focused on the COVID-19 response and recovery. Our efforts to respond to this resolution have also continued during COVID-19. This memorandum provides a high-level summary of staff efforts to date.

Coordinated Entry System and Rapid Rehousing:

City staff from Austin Public Health, Housing and Planning Department, and the Equity Office are voting members of the Membership Council, the governing body of the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care, as designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This council is responsible for setting the policies and procedures for the governance, operations and written standards for assistance and coordination of the homelessness response system and Continuum of Care grant funding. In July 2020, Membership Council took action to change scoring for the local Coordinated Entry System to address racial inequities through the housing assistance prioritization process. During the August 2020 meeting, Membership Council took action to include COVID-19 criteria in the Coordinated Entry System prioritization process. Consistent with recommendations from the City's contracted consultants, City staff and community leaders are continuing to evaluate and improve the local Coordinated Entry System as a key component of our community's homelessness response system.

Earlier this year, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), an economic relief package intended to protect Americans from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19. Multiple grants and allocations of funding are part of the CARES Act, including the Emergency Solutions Grant CARES Act (ESG-CV). Rapid Rehousing is an eligible activity through this grant and a proven intervention to assist individuals and families in moving out of homelessness into a home. City staff and ECHO (Ending Community Homelessness Coalition) staff have prioritized ESG-CV funding for Rapid Rehousing services and are contracting with homeless service organizations to



provide rapid rehousing services to hundreds of individuals, including housing location, financial assistance and case management. This emergency grant brings significant resources to our community over the next two years.

Housing Vouchers:

The Housing and Planning Department (HPD) currently oversees two separate contracts with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) to administer two Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) programs.

In FY2020-2021, HPD will combine both contracts into a new, streamlined TBRA contract with HACA. Through this contract, HPD will provide \$1,140,849 in federal funding to HACA to administer TBRA for 85 households experiencing homelessness, identified through the Coordinated Entry System. The new contract will begin in early 2021 and run through Sept 30, 2021, with opportunities for extension.

In addition, in FY2020-2021, HPD has budgeted \$3.6 million in Housing Trust Fund to pilot a local housing voucher program. HPD is working with an experienced homelessness consultant to best connect these operating subsidy dollars with existing and planned Permanent Supportive Housing. The pilot program will provide approximately 300 households experiencing homelessness with ongoing local housing vouchers augmented by supportive services.

Budget:

As directed in this resolution, Budget staff provided an update during the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget adoption process. CARES Act grants provide additional one-time funding assistance while our community responds to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Updates:

Over the past several months, City staff have worked closely with various City departments and numerous external partners to address housing needs across the city. On October 19, 2020, City staff provided a briefing to the Public Safety Committee on current efforts to address homelessness. This briefing covered updates on the many components for this resolution which include system-wide response through Coordinated Entry, Rapid Rehousing services, local housing vouchers, Permanent Supportive Housing and how the City is addressing those needs in the community.

The Homeless Services Division (HSD) within Austin Public Health continues to work with all divisions across Austin Public Health, multiple City departments and countless community partners to prevent, address, and end homelessness in our community.

If you have any questions, or if I can provide additional information, please contact me at (512) 972-5010 or via email at Stephanie.Hayden@austintexas.gov.



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